

METAL POLISHES:

- **Aluminum**—rub with baking soda paste or simmer mixture of 2 teaspoons cream of tartar and 2 cups water in stained pots and pans.
- **Brass, bronze and copper**—wash brass first in hot sudsy water and allow to dry. Dip lemon in salt and rub metal or mix salt and vinegar and rub metal, then rinse and dry. Or soak metal in flat cola, rinse and dry.
- **Chrome and tin**—rub with baking soda paste.
- **Pewter**—rub with sifted wood ashes and water.
- **Silver**—rub with baking soda paste. Or soak silver in a porcelain pan with a large piece of aluminum foil and enough water to cover the silver. Add 1 teaspoon each of salt and baking soda per quart of water.
- **Stainless steel**—rub with baking soda paste. Or rub brown stains with cloth dipped in ammonia. Or use low abrasion commercial cleanser.

BOWL CLEANERS:

- Pour 1/2 cup borax into toilet bowl and let stand overnight, then scrub with brush and flush.
- Pour 1 to 2 cups flat cola into toilet bowl, let stand 1 hour, brush and flush.
- Pour 1 cup borax and 1/4 cup lemon juice or white vinegar into toilet bowl and let stand 2 hours, then scrub with brush and flush.

**DO NOT MIX AMMONIA AND CHLORINE BLEACH:
DEADLY FUMES ARE PRODUCED.**

Barnstable County offers education and assistance to individuals, towns and small businesses to help them reduce the amounts of hazardous materials they use, store, and dispose of on Cape Cod.

For more information about identifying, storing, and disposing of household hazardous waste, call:



Barnstable County

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS PROGRAM

Collaborating with the University of Massachusetts Extension

800-319-2783

508-375-6699



8/08

Cape Cod Cooperative Extension, PO Box 367, Barnstable, MA 02630, 508-375-6690, www.capecodextension.org

Safer Alternatives for Household Cleaning Products

Concern for the environment often overlooks changes we can make to reduce the amounts of hazardous household products we purchase and use. Labelling of household cleaning products makes it difficult for consumers to choose the “right” product for the job. As a result, most homes have dozens of products designed to do just one or two jobs. Use up the hazardous products you have in your cabinets and use only safer alternatives from now on!

- Many of the substitute recipes for commercially-available products seem old-fashioned and quaint, and they are! The serious health and safety threats posed by hazardous materials in the home dictate that we each make individual choices and get “back to nature.”
- To start, you need to identify the hazardous products that are now in your home. Hazardous materials are toxic, corrosive, and can burn, react or explode when mixed with other materials. Examples of hazardous products commonly found in homes are drain, oven and toilet-bowl cleaners, furniture polish, floor wax, moth balls, nail polish remover and window cleaner.
- Next, use up these hazardous products according to the manufacturers’ directions. To dispose of them at your landfill or transfer station would pose more of a pollution problem than using up the products slowly.
- Finally, purchase and use only those products which are non-toxic. Use products commonly found in the home to do household cleaning chores. Homemade cleaners allow for individual control over ingredients. Not only can more toxic formulations be avoided, but irritating dyes and perfumes can be omitted. An added advantage is that alternatives are usually less expensive. You should remember, however, that some alternative methods may not be completely non-toxic.



Each of us can help to reduce toxic waste materials by using safer alternatives, and by making this individual choice, we contribute to the overall effort to create a cleaner environment.

BASIC INGREDIENTS TO HAVE ON HAND

Product	Purpose
Baking soda	cleaner, deodorizer, fire extinguisher
Borax*	cleaner, laundry aid, insect repellent
Brushes (tooth, scrub, bottle, toilet)	cleaner
Lemon	cleaner, deodorizer, stain remover
Liquid dish detergent	cleaner
Nylon or stainless steel scrubber	cleaner
Plumber's snake, plunger	drain cleaner
Salt	cleaner
Steel wool, sandpaper	cleaner, paint remover
Vinegar	cleaner, deodorizer
Washing soda*	cleaner, laundry aid



*Borax is poisonous if consumed. Washing soda is a strong detergent; wear gloves. They should be used with caution. They are, however, less toxic than many of their commercial counterparts.

ALL-PURPOSE CLEANERS:

- **Vinegar**—undiluted for tougher stains, diluted with water for regular cleaning.
- **Lemon juice**—undiluted for tougher stains, diluted with water for regular cleaning.
- **Baking soda**—as a paste, or dilute with water.
- **Washing soda**—3 tablespoons per quart warm water.
- 1 teaspoon washing soda, 1/4 cup white vinegar, 1/2 teaspoon liquid soap, 4 cups very hot water.

Cape Cod Cooperative Extension: Barnstable County, UMass Extension, and USDA cooperating

DRAIN CLEANERS:

- Pour 1/2 gallon boiling water into sink drain. Wait a few minutes. Pour another 1/2 gallon boiling water into drain.
- Pour 1/2 cup baking soda and 1/2 cup warm white vinegar down the drain. After 15 minutes, flush with boiling water to dissolve crystals.
- Pour 3 tablespoons washing soda and 2 cups warm water down the drain.
- Pour 1 cup warm white vinegar down the drain; cover.
- Use plunger, plumber's snake or drain auger.

FURNITURE POLISHES AND CLEANERS:

- Mix 1/2 teaspoon lemon oil, 1 cup mineral oil. Spray on cloth, rub into wood.
- Mix 1/4 cup olive oil and 1/4 cup white vinegar. Store in glass jar. Put on cloth and polish wood.
- Mix 1/4 cup vegetable oil, 1/4 cup lemon juice. Store in glass jar. Put on cloth and polish wood.

OVEN CLEANERS:

- Sprinkle spills with baking soda or salt while still warm, then wipe up. Scour with steel wool if very soiled.
- Sprinkle spills with baking soda, cover with wet paper towels, and let stand overnight, then wipe up and rinse.
- Set a dish of ammonia in the oven overnight. Add water to the ammonia in the morning and wipe the interior.

SCOURING CLEANSERS:

- **Baking soda**—sprinkle on sponge, scour, rinse.
- **Salt or borax**—sprinkle on sponge, scour, rinse.
- **Less hazardous commercial products**—feldspar powder cleanser, low-abrasive liquid cleanser.

SPOT REMOVERS:

- **Candle wax**—when wax has hardened, scrape off excess with a dull knife. Press with warm iron between absorbent paper. Launder with borax or washing soda.
- **Fruit and wine stains**—wet spot with white vinegar, let stand half an hour, then rinse.
- **Grease stains**—rub chalk on stain, let set, then wash. Cold water and Ivory Soap will remove grease stains from natural fibers.
- **Tea stains**—wet spot with white vinegar, let stand half an hour, then rinse.
- **Coffee stains**—wet spot with cold water, cover with glycerine, and let stand 2 to 3 hours. Launder.
- **Upholstery cleaner**—mix 6 tablespoons mild soap flakes or liquid, 2 cups boiling water and 2 teaspoons borax. Whip with beater and apply foam only.
- **White spots on furniture**—dip finger in mineral oil, then in wood ashes or salt, rub spot with the grain of the wood. Repeat until spot disappears.

TUB, TILE AND GLASS CLEANERS:

- **Glass cleaner**—mix 3 tablespoons white vinegar, 1/2 teaspoon liquid soap, and 2 cups water. Add 1/4 teaspoon washing soda for really dirty windows. Store in labeled container.
- **Spray cleaner**—mix 1/2 teaspoon washing soda, 1 teaspoon borax, 1/2 teaspoon liquid soap, 3 tablespoons vinegar, 2 cups very hot water. Spray over surface of tub or tile, let stand 5 minutes, wipe over surface, rubbing stubborn stains, rinse.
- **Scouring cleanser**—use baking soda, borax or washing soda or less hazardous commercial products, such as feldspar powder cleansers or low-abrasive liquid cleansers.
- **Borax**—add 1/4 cup borax to 1 quart warm water to remove mildew. To remove persistent mildew stain, apply borax full strength; let stand 15 minutes, then scrub.